

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT  
FEBRUARY 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION MAY  
2001

# Lowestoft College



ADULT LEARNING  
INSPECTORATE

### **Adult Learning Inspectorate**

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- ◆ work-based training for all people over 16
- ◆ provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- ◆ the University for Industry's *learndirect* provision
- ◆ adult and community learning
- ◆ training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

### **Grading**

In summarising their judgements about the quality of provision in curriculum or occupational areas and about the quality of leadership and management, including quality assurance and equality of opportunity, inspectors use a five-point scale. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- ◆ grade 1 – outstanding
- ◆ grade 2 – good
- ◆ grade 3 – satisfactory
- ◆ grade 4 – unsatisfactory
- ◆ grade 5 – very weak.

## SUMMARY

The original inspection of Lowestoft College was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in a less than satisfactory grade being awarded for quality assurance. This area has been reinspected against the requirements of the *Common Inspection Framework* by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, which replaced the Training Standards Council on 1 April 2001. The section of the original report dealing with quality assurance has been replaced with the findings of the reinspection. Also, the report summary, report introduction and introduction to the inspection findings have been updated and reflect the findings of the reinspection. Sections of the report, dealing with areas which have not been reinspected, have been left in their original form. The amended inspection report is published on the Adult Learning Inspectorate's website ([www.ali.gov.uk](http://www.ali.gov.uk)).

**Lowestoft College offers good training in marine transport, with good resources. Off-the-job training in engineering is well planned and there are good retention rates. Foundation for work training is well structured in a wide variety of subjects. Trainees in construction have a good off-the-job training programme but there are too few assessments in the workplace. Key skills are well integrated with training in business administration and there is some well-planned training. Retention rates in hospitality and hairdressing are poor. Trainees are making slow progress. Equal opportunities practices are well implemented within the college but this does not extend to the workplace. Additional learning is not always clearly recorded, owing to a complex structure for the management and procedures of trainee support. Management of work-based training is not well co-ordinated. There is little monitoring of data. At the time of the original inspection the college's quality assurance procedures were not used effectively to improve training. Now, quality assurance is satisfactory and there is good internal verification, but data are not used effectively to plan improvements.**

### GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	3
Engineering	2
Transportation	2
Business administration	3
Hospitality	3
Hair & beauty	3
Foundation for work	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	3
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	4

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Quality assurance	3

### KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good work placements

- ◆ effective community networks and links
- ◆ good integration of key skills with training in business administration
- ◆ well-planned training in marine transport
- ◆ strong recognition of and response to local training needs

**KEY WEAKNESSES**

- ◆ poor retention rates in hair and hospitality
- ◆ lack of clear structure for providing learning support
- ◆ poor use of data on retention and achievement
- ◆ unclear responsibility among curriculum teams for planning training in the workplace

## INTRODUCTION

1. Lowestoft College is a medium-sized, general further education college situated in England's most easterly town, Lowestoft. In 1999, the college celebrated 125 years of further education. The college is situated on a single site. It uses other training facilities within the area, which include a theatre and a training centre for construction. A range of specialist resources is used for catering, engineering, construction, hair and beauty, and in particular for maritime and offshore programmes. At the time of the original inspection, the college contracted with Norfolk and Waveney Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) to offer work-based training in construction, engineering, business administration, hairdressing, hospitality, marine transport and foundation for work. The college also contracted with Suffolk TEC for the full-time education and training option of the New Deal. The college now contracts for work-based learning with the Local Learning and Skills Council (LLSC) for Suffolk. At the time of the original inspection, there were 185 trainees. Sixty-six were modern apprentices, 72 were national trainees and 47 were youth trainees. There were 21 New Deal clients on the full-time training and education option. There were three full-time members of staff and three part-time members of staff responsible for the contract with the TEC. There are now 176 trainees. Sixty-two are advanced modern apprentices, 86 foundation modern apprentices and 28 youth trainees. There are 18 New Deal clients from the Suffolk unit of delivery, on the full-time training and education option.

2. The district of Waveney and the town of Lowestoft are situated in a rural location with a poor transport infrastructure. The traditional industries of fishing and ship-building are in decline. Twelve per cent of the working population are employed in these sectors. There is an increase in leisure and tourism. Five per cent are working in these sectors. The unemployment rate in the area in November 1999 was 6.7 per cent. By March 2001, the unemployment rate in Waveney had fallen to 5.7 per cent, compared with the national average of 3.3 per cent. At the time of the original inspection, in 1999, the proportion of school leavers in Waveney achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C and above was 42.9 per cent, compared with the average in Suffolk of 53.8 per cent and the national average of 47.9 per cent. In 2000, the percentage for Waveney had risen to 46.6 per cent, compared with the average for Suffolk of 53.3 per cent and the national average of 49.2 per cent. Less than 2 per cent of the local population are from minority ethnic groups.

## INSPECTION FINDINGS

3. The management team first compiled a self-assessment report in 1998 with the assistance of the director of planning and quality. Team members attended a series of workshops organised by TECs. Trainees and employers were sent survey forms. Meetings were conducted with the contract manager and curriculum staff. A second self-assessment report was produced in November 1999. This report identified a number of strengths and weaknesses which were not applicable to work-based training but to the college as a whole. Inspectors awarded the same grade in three occupational areas, a higher grade in one area and a lower grade in three. The same grade was awarded for trainee support and management of training. A lower grade was awarded for equal opportunities and quality assurance. An action plan was produced after the inspection. The principal and vice-principals collated it. Consultation took place with other key staff of the college. Trainees and employers were not consulted. A special report referring to the progress of the action plan was produced for reinspection by the vice-principals. Inspectors agreed with the grade identified for quality assurance in the special report.

4. The original inspection was carried out jointly with the FEFC. A team of eight Training Standards Council's inspectors spent a total of 30 days at Lowestoft College in February 2000. They met with 102 trainees and five New Deal clients. They visited 35 work placements and interviewed 28 workplace supervisors. Inspectors interviewed curriculum staff, TEC and New Deal management staff and college management staff. They examined a range of the college's and awarding body's paperwork. They examined trainees' files and portfolios. Evidence from observations of training sessions, assessments and reviews of documents made by FEFC inspectors were also used. Inspectors observed 13 training sessions and awarded the grades shown in the table below.

5. The reinspection was carried out by a team of two inspectors, who spent a total of six days at the college in May 2001. Inspectors interviewed 13 clients and 13 members of the college's staff. Seven workplaces were visited and seven workplace supervisors were interviewed. Inspectors examined paperwork relating to quality assurance and internal verification. They also looked at two learners' individual training plans and four learners' portfolios.

Grades awarded to instruction sessions at the original inspection

	GRADE 1	GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5	TOTAL
Engineering		3	3			6
Business administration		2				2
Hospitality	2	1				3
Hair & beauty				1		1
Foundation for work		1				1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>13</b>

## OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

### Construction

### Grade 3

6. There are 19 trainees in construction, of whom 11 are national trainees and six are modern apprentices. Two are on other training programmes. There are six New Deal clients. All trainees attend off-the-job training at the college one day a week or in blocks of three weeks' duration. This flexibility enables attendance patterns to be arranged to suit the needs of a range of employers. Most of the employers are small companies offering various construction services in Lowestoft and the surrounding area. National vocational qualifications (NVQs) at levels 2 and 3 are currently offered in brickwork, carpentry and joinery, and painting and decorating. All trainees are employed. New Deal clients follow a training programme at a training centre in Kirkley. This centre has been established through the innovative links created between the college, local construction companies and developers. All the off-the-job training and most of the assessment for trainees is carried out in the college's workshops. Business support officers visit trainees in the workplace at three-monthly intervals. Further weaknesses were identified by inspectors and a lower grade was awarded than that given by the college in its self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ comprehensive off-the-job training programmes
- ◆ strong and innovative external partnerships
- ◆ good assessment in college workshops
- ◆ good job outcomes for New Deal clients

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ weak work-based assessment

- ◆ poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training
- ◆ lack of target-setting in review process
- ◆ no workplace reviews for some trainees

7. There is a wide range of good companies employing trainees. They include small building developers, local authority service departments, holiday complexes and a ship's refurbisher. In these companies trainees have good learning opportunities in the specific subjects that they require. All placements provide trainees with work experience. In most cases, this is appropriate to their NVQ programmes. Off-the-job training is effectively planned. Standards are specified and, in most cases, learning opportunities are effectively used and standards are met. Although the retention rate is high, at 100 per cent for modern apprentices in 1998-99 and 67 per cent for young people on other work-based programmes, not all trainees complete their NVQs.

8. College assessors assess trainees. Most assessments are carried out in the college's well-resourced workshops. They are effectively and systematically carried out and records are well maintained. Trainees are clear about standards to be achieved and know how they are progressing. While some trainees are able to assemble their portfolios well, others find this difficult. Some trainees do not fully understand the importance of building a portfolio of evidence. New Deal clients are effectively assessed on-the-job through being involved with the community regeneration initiative. A high number of these clients secure long-term employment with local and national building companies.

9. There is a high standard of health and safety training across all programmes. Trainees' awareness and implementation of safe practice are good. The construction department has created many innovative links with local construction companies and developers. The college is currently running a brokerage scheme on behalf of housing developers. It is managing a series of projects as part of a community regeneration initiative. These include renovating old Victorian houses from disused bedsitter conversions to high-class quality family housing. Other partnership arrangements include close links with local and national companies to develop work-based assessment programmes for employed trainees. External verification reports show that all courses comply with requirements and that action points raised have been systematically addressed. The internal verification system is well recorded and effectively implemented.

10. Two youth trainees and one modern apprentice have been transferred from another training provider who has ceased trading in the area. These trainees have had their needs re-assessed and are now working on appropriate programmes. In one instance, a carpentry and joinery trainee had been working at a much higher skill level at work than at off-the-job training sessions. The business support officers visit trainees on-the-job at three-monthly intervals. They work well to ensure that trainees' needs are being addressed. Trainees' progress is discussed



and recorded, pastoral issues are dealt with and, on most occasions, a company representative is involved.

11. Some trainees have not been reviewed for four months. Short-term targets are not always set as a result of review meetings. Although employers are very supportive of trainees, they are not always aware of the content of the off-the-job training programmes and are unable to match the workplace experience to the off-the-job training. There is little assessment in the workplace. Most of the assessment takes place in the college's workshop and so trainees are not always assessed in a real working environment. Opportunities are missed for work-based training and assessment.

## **Engineering**

## **Grade 2**

12. Lowestoft College offers training in automotive, electrical, mechanical, servicing and maintenance engineering, along with fabrication and welding at NVQ levels 2 and 3. There are 63 trainees on the programme. There are 42 modern apprentices, of whom 11 are working towards qualifications in mechanical engineering, 12 towards qualifications in electrical engineering, and 19 towards qualifications in fabrication and welding. There are 10 national trainees of whom one is working towards electrical engineering, one towards fabrication and welding and eight towards motor-vehicle qualifications. There are 11 on other training programmes, of whom nine are working towards a motor-vehicle qualification and one towards a qualification in each of electrical and fabrication welding. There are four New Deal clients on various engineering programmes. Trainees are employed with local engineering companies or on training programmes with a good expectation of employment at the end of training. Trainees on automotive programmes gain most of their practical experience in the workplace. Off-the-job training takes place at the college one day a week during term time. Practical exercises are built into this programme. The other engineering programmes at level 2 are designed to include either an 18- or 36-week block of practical and theory training before trainees enter the workplace. A typical week consists of four days of basic engineering and one day in the specialist trade area. Thereafter trainees are placed with local employers. All modern apprentices following mechanical, electrical, maintenance and fabrication welding programmes attend college for one day each week. Assessment is planned to take place in the workplace. The length of the modern apprenticeship programme is tailored to suit the employer and the trainee, following consultation. Off-the-job trainers have extensive experience in engineering. They hold relevant trade and assessor qualifications. Inspectors agreed with most of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report, identified of further strengths and awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good foundation training
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ well-planned off-the-job training
- ◆ high retention rates
- ◆ good assessment practice
- ◆ strong safety practices

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor understanding by employers of the modern apprenticeship framework
- ◆ slow development and integration of key skills training
- ◆ inadequate equipment in college workshops

13. The level of basic engineering skills taught during foundation training is good. Employers value the good grounding that is given in associated engineering disciplines as well as in the specialist trade. Some employers have made valuable contributions to the college by donating specialist equipment to help with training activities. Motor-vehicle trainees have the opportunity to work on modern roadworthy vehicles to improve their diagnostic and reparation skills. There are placements with a wide variety of different engineering companies, ranging from small rural garages to large industrial shipping companies. Good continuity of training has been established between employers and the college. Visits are made by the review teams quarterly to discuss trainees' progress. Trainees are allocated mentors to supervise their tasks in the workplace and validate their evidence. The range of tasks available in the workplace is more than adequate to meet the range of competencies required. Recruitment of modern apprentices has doubled each year for the last two years. Achievement and retention rates for the level 2 foundation NVQ are good. Off-the-job training sessions are well conducted and trainers interact well with trainees. Questions from trainees are encouraged and effectively dealt with. Assessment planning and record keeping at level 2 are well established. There are good systems for monitoring trainees' progress, which is on display on noticeboards in the training area. This helps to motivate trainees. A good variety of assessment methods are used. However, formal assessment is not normally completed until the end of the programme. Time is allocated during work time to work on portfolios. Portfolios are of a high standard with the tasks completed in order to cover the range required clearly identified. Retention rates on all programmes are improving, with over 90 per cent of trainees remaining on the programme in 1999.

14. Qualified assessors visit companies monthly to carry out assessments. High standards of health and safety are emphasised at all stages of training. In the machine workshops, all machines have been fitted with the necessary emergency stop system, which automatically cuts off the machinery. In addition, an overhead

wire enables off-the-job trainers to stop machinery instantly on identification of a potential hazard. The trainees transfer their safety awareness to the workplace. Good health and safety practice is also followed at the college. A new extraction system has recently been installed in the welding section.

15. Not all employers understand the complex framework of the engineering qualifications. Many employers value the traditional approach to training rather than the NVQ system. Insufficient effort has been put into ensuring that employers are familiar with the requirements of the framework. Some trainees are unaware of the progression routes available within the industry following their foundation training. Limited information is made available. Some trainees have not received learning support packs six months into their programme. Opportunities are missed to add to trainees' skills by their achieving appropriate additional qualifications. For example, trainees have not received training and certification in specific areas such as manual handling and abrasive wheels.

16. The college does not effectively promote key skills training in engineering. Employers are not informed of the key skills requirements for level 3 trainees. The college has set up a working group to improve the integration of key skills into the programmes. Information is slow to reach off-the-job trainers and trainees. Trainees are not aware of how key skills are going to be assessed. In the college workshops some tools and equipment are outdated or in short supply. The main areas are electrical test equipment, drawing materials and modern cutting tools.

## **Transportation**

## **Grade 2**

17. Lowestoft College offers a marine programme leading to an NVQ at level 2 in merchant vessel operations. This is equivalent to the grade II seaman's certificate. It is a new programme, first offered in 1998. There are three trainees, and one New Deal client on the full-time education and employment option. All the trainees are employed. Trainees undergo a medical inspection and complete a training session in personal survival techniques in the college's environment tank. This simulates conditions of wind, waves, rain and thunder in the open sea. Trainees then participate in a 28-day observation trip on an operational vessel before starting their programme. Following the trip, they attend a six-week period of block release at the college covering the statutory requirements of the maritime and coastguard agency. Trainees work towards certificates in first aid and elementary fire fighting and receive additional training in personal safety and social responsibility. They also participate in a two-day outdoor team-building exercise. The training covers various shipboard duties such as dealing with stock, wire and rope splicing techniques, vessel maintenance and housekeeping, watch duties and operating and maintaining fast-rescue craft. On completion of the block-release phase, trainees start a cycle of 28 days at sea followed by 14 days' leave. During the periods of leave, trainees may spend some time at the college to work on their portfolios of evidence. After 18 weeks, trainees spend two weeks at the college for training leading to the certificate of proficiency in survival craft. They then return to sea

for four further 28-day periods. While at sea, training is provided by the ship's officers and crew. Trainees record evidence for their NVQ. The ship's master or first officer authenticates the evidence. Progress reviews with college staff take place during the trainees' leave period.

18. There are five full-time and two part-time training staff and three technicians at the college. Five of the staff are qualified as ship's masters and two hold an authorised ship's pilot licence. All training staff are qualified as trainers, four are qualified assessors and one is qualified as an internal verifier. Two staff hold nationally recognised health and safety qualifications. Assessment is carried out in the college by college staff during the trainees' leave periods. A variety of assessment methods is used. Internal verification is also carried out by college staff. Two trainees have completed the programme and six have left early. Five other trainees, not on the TEC contract, have been on the programme. All completed their training. The self-assessment report accurately identified some strengths and weaknesses. The high standard of training was not identified as a strength in the report. The self-assessment process also failed to identify the weakness in assessment practice. One of the weaknesses in the self-assessment report has been corrected. Inspectors awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good off-the-job-training
- ◆ good quality portfolios
- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ rigorous health and safety practices
- ◆ well-planned on-the-job training
- ◆ effective monitoring of trainees' progress
- ◆ additional qualifications achieved

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ low retention rates
- ◆ lack of focus in progress reviews
- ◆ some weak assessment practice

19. Trainees receive good off-the-job training. The programme covers a wide variety of topics. Many of the topics are additional to the requirements of the NVQ but are relevant to merchant vessel operations. They extend the trainees' knowledge and capabilities. Learning materials given to trainees are thorough and well presented. Training methods are also varied. There is considerable practical work, some of it in small boats, to reinforce the theory training. Trainers are qualified and have substantial occupational experience. Trainees use the

environmental tank for survival training and the college's computer-controlled bridge simulator. This simulator is a state-of-the-art piece of equipment. Trainees produce portfolios of a high standard. The evidence is relevant, readily attributable, valid and neatly presented. Trainees receive help and advice with portfolio-building during their periods of leave but much of the work is done while at sea. Some trainees gather evidence for more than the required number of optional units in their NVQ. Work placements are good. Trainees serve on ships owned by their employer. These are mainly used on standby duties at oil and gas platforms in the North Sea. There is some platform supply work. The nature of the ship's standby duties gives the trainees ample time for their on-the-job training, some of which they arrange for themselves. For example, one trainee needed to take part in a fire drill in the engine room to provide evidence for the NVQ. The trainee approached the ship's master who arranged an appropriate fire drill to meet the trainees' requirements. The ships also provide ample opportunities for the trainees to gather evidence for their NVQs. The health and safety requirements of working at sea are rigorously applied. Trainees receive comprehensive health and safety training over and above the statutory requirements. This is continually reinforced in the college and at sea. Trainees have a high awareness of health and safety. For example, one trainee could describe how an assessment for a permit to work in a confined space is carried out. This duty is usually performed by the ship's safety officer. On-the-job training is well planned. College staff meet with the employer monthly to discuss training requirements. Trainees are aware of the requirements of their NVQ and contribute to the planning. While at sea, trainees discuss the requirements of their training plan with the ships' officers. Trainees' progress is accurately monitored and recorded. Trainers, trainees and employers have a copy of the progress sheet. This is updated and re-issued following each assessment. College staff meet monthly to discuss all trainees' progress. Minutes of the meeting are kept. These contain action points, responsibilities and timescales. Trainees work towards a number of qualifications in addition to the requirements of their programme. All are relevant to their employment. Some, for example the coxswain's ticket for fast rescue craft, are provided by the employer.

20. Retention rates on the programme are low. Of the 12 trainees who started on the programme, six left before completion. Of these, five left after their first trip to sea, having decided that a seafarer's career was not what they wanted. This was before the college introduced the concept of an observation trip before the trainees are registered. Assessments are carried out by an unqualified assessor, and are not countersigned by a qualified assessor. The college has been sent guidance on the procedures for assessors under training by the awarding body. This practice does not follow the procedures. Progress reviews are not sufficiently focused on trainees' achievements and progress. They are more concerned with matters relating to trainees' satisfaction and other pastoral support. They contain few definitive action points for the trainees to achieve.

## **Business administration**

## **Grade 3**

21. There are 25 trainees on the business administration programme. There are nine youth trainees working towards NVQ at level 2 in business administration, nine modern apprentices and seven national trainees. This includes nine trainees following programmes leading to a joint NVQ in accounts and technician award. In administration, off-the-job training for trainees working towards level 2 takes place on one day each week. This takes the form of a NVQ workshop. Level 3 trainees have a more flexible pattern of attendance, usually a half-day training session during college term time. College assessors visit the workplace to assess trainees. Trainees collect examples of work-based evidence for assessment. The off-the-job workshop sessions are held at college. They provide portfolio development training and opportunities and necessary theoretical and practical training. Some short in-house college placements are used for practice and assessment if required. The programme for level 2 trainees includes half a day training in keyboard and text processing leading to secretarial qualifications. The business services officer carries out a quarterly review in the workplace. The assessor interviews trainees starting modern apprentice programmes. New trainees undergo an initial basic skills test and modern apprentices are also initially assessed for key skills. Further assessment is carried out at the start of the off-the-job programme to identify trainees' programme requirements in more detail.

22. Nine trainees are following accounting programmes leading to NVQs at levels 2, 3 and 4. Trainees also can work towards accounting technician awards. Trainees attend college one day a week for off-the-job training and join a standard day-release programme. They are expected to use logbooks to record any workplace activity. Work-based assignments are set. Assessment takes place in college during off-the-job sessions and through taking exams. A business services officer visits trainees to carry out the quarterly review in the workplace. Inspectors agreed with the strengths and weaknesses identified in the self-assessment report and awarded the same grade.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ well-planned on- and off-the-job training in administration
- ◆ good integration of key skills with training
- ◆ good learning materials
- ◆ effective target-setting

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ outdated office equipment
- ◆ no planned on-the-job training in accounts
- ◆ poor retention rates on level 2 administration programmes

23. In administration, off-the-job trainers from the college visit trainees at work. The initial visit is used to plan the programme and help trainees and employers to identify the ways in which competence can be achieved in the workplace. Employers contribute well to the training and assessment plans. The off-the-job programme is well structured and planned. The programme is flexible enough to respond to the needs of trainees' work roles. In the off-the-job sessions, staff work to identify and meet trainees' needs. College assessors visit trainees at work. Assessments are well planned and effectively carried out. Internal verification is well organised.

24. In administration, targets are set and reviewed in both on-the-job training and off-the-job sessions. Trainees can readily identify their progress and achievements. They were clear about what is required of them and what they need to do to achieve their targets. Portfolios are of a good standard and the majority of evidence is generated at work. Key skills have been effectively integrated into the programme. Trainees understand the importance of the role of key skills and how they are integrated. Trainees use good learning materials to support their training. These include key skills learning materials, theory notes, work sheets, textbooks and work-based assignments. The college has a training office where facilities are also available to trainees. Trainees working towards the level 2 NVQ in administration receive off-the-job training leading towards qualifications in word processing and text processing.

25. The off-the-job training programmes are satisfactorily organised in accounts. Trainees clearly understand what is expected of them. Key skills have been recently introduced. Trainees know what they are required to do to and are given advice and guidance. All assessment is carried out off-the-job. Trainees are encouraged to bring forward evidence from the workplace. They use detailed log books to help with this. Trainees are employed in relevant work placements and gain valuable experience. However, opportunities are missed to involve employers in the planning and design of the on-the-job training programme. The modern apprentice programmes in accounts do not fulfil the full requirements of the modern apprenticeship framework.

26. Some off-the-job training in administration takes place in facilities with out-of-date office equipment, information technology hardware and software. Seating and the general layout of the room used are less than satisfactory. The need to upgrade equipment has been recognised and the college has plans to improve the situation. The retention and achievement rates are not broken down between administration and accounts. The retention rates are poor for both the modern apprenticeship and youth programmes, with over 70 per cent of trainees leaving early in 1998-99. The achievement rates for those who stay are above the national average. The average over the past two years is 96 per cent.

## Hospitality

## Grade 3

27. There are two distinct programme areas in this occupational area. These are hospitality and meat processing. There are 11 national trainees working towards qualifications in meat processing. This programme started only five weeks ago. In hospitality there are six modern apprentices, 11 national trainees and three other trainees. All are working towards a range of programmes in hospitality, which include food preparation and cookery at NVQ levels 1 and 2, bar service NVQs at level 2 and supervision NVQs at level 3. With the exception of a trainee with moderate learning difficulties, who has a work placement in the college refectory, all the trainees are employed in catering establishments in the Lowestoft area. All the national and other trainees receive off-the-job training at the college one day a week during term time. The modern apprentices attend off-the-job training sessions at the college every other week. The bar service training takes place in the workplace. The meat processing trainees' on- and off-the-job training takes place at the abattoir where they work. These trainees are assessed in the workplace by two supervisors with appropriate assessor awards and occupational experience. Off-the-job-training is carried out in the workplace by a college trainer who is also the designated internal verifier. The trainees also learn key skills at a small training centre in a neighbouring village. The college's self-assessment report was insufficiently self critical and failed to identify weaknesses in assessment practices and the slow rate of trainees' achievement in hospitality. The recent introduction of meat processing meant that this area was not included in the report. Inspectors awarded a lower grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ strong links between on- and off-the-job training in meat processing

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ little workplace assessment in hospitality
- ◆ poor retention rates
- ◆ slow integration of key skills into training

28. Trainees are employed in a wide range of different work placements in the area. These include large holiday villages, small catering outlets and hotels and restaurants. Workplace supervisors provide many opportunities for trainees to develop their skills across a wide range of activities. The training facilities for off-the-job training at the college are good. Off-the-job trainers are well qualified and endeavour to keep abreast of current industry practice. The training resources for meat processing are excellent. There is a dedicated classroom, and a disused meat



processing plant has also been converted to provide an excellent training facility. Hygiene and safety procedures are strictly enforced in the plant. The employer supplies the trainees with all the appropriate protective equipment. The learning materials for this programme are still being developed. A trainee with additional learning needs has a sheltered work placement within the college's catering operations. Trainees are closely supervised and guided through their learning by the catering staff. One previous trainee on this programme has successfully progressed to a national traineeship.

29. More able trainees and those with prior experience are able to complete their training more quickly. All the assessment for meat processing takes place as the trainees work on the meat-processing lines. This is well planned but the programme is very new. The opportunities for trainees to participate in the national and international catering events identified in the self-assessment report are limited because most of the places are offered to full-time students.

30. Little use is made of work-based evidence for trainees in food preparation. They complete workplace-monitoring sheets regularly but are unsure about the value of this activity. Thirty-three per cent of the qualification is assessed in the workplace by direct observation or by the use of the workplace monitoring sheets. The remainder of the assessment is carried out in the college's training kitchen by college staff. This programme has a strong emphasis on technical skills and the quality of training sessions is good. However, trainees are not set demanding targets by their trainers even for the completion of the NVQ level 1 programme they follow as part of their first year. Assessment of the trainee chefs only takes place in the college's practice kitchen and is not structured.

31. Retention rates are poor across the programme. During the last three years there has been an average retention rate of 49 per cent. Retention is improving and now stands at 60 per cent. In 1999, only one trainee completed the qualification. The college recognised in 1998 that the retention rates for trainees working in the bar and food service area was particularly poor. Training in these areas is no longer offered.

32. An off-the-job trainer visits hospitality trainees once a term. No assessment is carried out during these visits, which are used to establish a link between the college and the trainees' workplaces. Employers are not sufficiently informed about opportunities for naturally occurring evidence, or about the use of witness testimony. Trainees are being slow to achieve. Key skills training and assessment are still being developed and are not yet integrated into the programmes. Although some hospitality employers have qualified assessors on their staff, they have little input into the assessment process. Little use is made of witness statements.

### **Hair & beauty**

### **Grade 3**

33. Lowestoft College has 25 trainees on hairdressing training programmes. Of

**GOOD PRACTICE**

*This is an example of good monitoring of trainees' progress. Some trainees keep a 'model diary' in which they keep a daily record of the tasks they have completed during the day. This enables them and their assessors to review their progress.*

these, 22 are national trainees. All these trainees are working towards NVQ level 2 in hairdressing. There are three modern apprentices, who are working towards NVQ level 3 in hairdressing. There are also two New Deal clients. There are 24 female trainees and one male trainee. All the trainees are employed and work in salons in Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft and the surrounding area. One trainee has learning difficulties. During their first year of training, trainees attend college one day each week for 23 weeks. This is mainly for theory but also for some practical training. In the second year, attendance at college is on average one day each month. The first-year trainees attend for three consecutive weeks each month, with the second-year trainees attending on the fourth. This attendance is during college term times. Some of the second-year trainees attend college on Tuesday evenings for eight weeks in order to work in the barbering unit. Most of the practical skills are developed and assessed in the workplace, in partnership with 17 qualified work-based assessors. They are guided in assessment by the college's internal verifier. Modern apprentices attend college for one day each month. The low retention and achievement rates were not identified in the self-assessment report. A lower grade was awarded by inspectors than that given by the college.

**STRENGTHS**

- ◆ good work placements
- ◆ high percentage of work-based assessors
- ◆ good participation by trainees in programme planning

**WEAKNESSES**

- ◆ poor retention rates in modern apprenticeships
- ◆ uninspiring theory teaching
- ◆ poor planning of workplace assessment

34. Trainees have good access to a range of suitable workplaces to meet their individual needs. Some are modern and highly fashionable professional salons in high-street locations. Others are smaller, more traditional salons located in rural districts. The college's salon where off-the-job training takes place is spacious and well lit. There is plenty of space, allowing ample room for specialist demonstrations.

35. Eighty-nine per cent of the workplaces have a qualified assessor. Most of the training and assessment is undertaken on-the-job at specified times, usually during the evening. In addition, the college has two members of staff who undertake some assessment and internal verification. One of these works at NVQ level 3. The other works at level 2 and is still working towards the internal verification award. Trainees have good opportunities to participate in the planning of their off-the-job training programme. Second-year trainees raised some concerns in the first year of their training. As a result, the second year of the programme has been changed.

Trainees now undertake all their practical assessment on-the-job. The time spent in college is now devoted mainly to theory work.

36. Retention rates are poor across the programmes. Six (31 per cent) of the national trainees who started the programme in September 1999 have left early. In 1998-99, all four of the modern apprentices left early. These were all within the first four months of the programme. There has been some improvement in achievement rates on the youth training programme but this programme is no longer run in the college as it has been superseded by national traineeships. Staff on the curriculum area responsible for hair are aware of the situation and have taken some action. Meetings have been held where retention and achievement issues have been discussed.

37. Theory training is uninspiring and unchallenging for trainees. A large amount of time is spent writing notes and copying diagrams from overhead transparencies. For part of the lesson, trainers dictate notes to the trainees. Theory work takes place in the practical hairdressing salon where trainees have to balance their files on their knees while writing. One end of the room contains the hairdressing reception and dispensary with other students undertaking a lesson in the other half of the room. Trainees are reluctant to participate fully in the lesson for fear of disturbing other people. During the observed session the trainees were very quiet. There was little interaction with the trainer. Different rates of learning were not taken into consideration. One trainee who is known by the trainer to have problems with reading and writing is expected to keep up with the pace of the other trainees. Only by copying from a friend do trainees catch up on any lesson notes that they have missed.

38. There is no formal assessment planning for work-based assessment. Work-based assessors/trainers do not have a formal induction to the training programme. They are not invited to attend assessors' meetings or to participate in sharing good practice across the programmes. A business services officer from the college, who is not occupationally experienced in hairdressing, carries out reviews in the workplace. At the start of the training programme, the business services officer completes the trainees' individual training plans. These include anticipated completion dates identified by the officer. The dates are not negotiated with either the on- or off-the-job trainer or with the trainee. The completion dates are nearly always two years ahead and follow the pattern of the college's programme. The trainee keeps a copy and another is kept in the trainee's file in the business unit. The on- and off-the-job trainers and assessors do not have individual copies.

## **Foundation for work**

## **Grade 2**

39. Lowestoft College provides prevocational training for young people. There are 19 trainees on the foundation programme, comprising nine men and 10 women. Most enter the programme in September as recent school leavers. Of the 18 on the programme, nine are in their second year. The majority of the trainees have moderate learning difficulties and enter the programme directly from school via

the careers service. They can remain on the programme for two years. Where this is a realistic option, trainees are encouraged to work towards an NVQ at level 1 in subject areas such as construction, small animal care, catering or hairdressing. They join mainstream college courses for off-the-job training. In addition, where the need has been identified, literacy and numeracy training is offered as part of the off-the-job training. This is carried out in workshop sessions in the college's learner-support department. Trainees have the opportunity to gain qualifications in wordpower and numberpower either at entry level or level 1, or to work towards some units of level 2. They can also gain certificates in health and safety, basic food hygiene and first aid. The self-assessment report identified a number of strengths but the importance of good-quality and appropriate work placements was insufficiently emphasised. Inspectors awarded a higher grade than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ highly appropriate work placements
- ◆ wide range of additional qualifications available
- ◆ good rate of progression into employment

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ no individual targets set for learning
- ◆ poor record-keeping

40. Trainees work with a range of employers which offer a variety of work experiences suited to the trainees' needs and preferences. These include catering organisations, care premises, construction projects, garden centres and other retail outlets. Some trainees gain work experience through becoming involved in the college's construction project in the southern part of the town. Trainees are carefully matched to the placements. Most trainees start in a work placement early in their training. Of the 18 trainees on the programme, 17 are currently on a work placement or work taster. Where either the trainee or the employer finds the placement arrangement unsuitable, an alternative is found after a full discussion and agreement with the trainee. There is no disruption to the trainees. Those not on work tasters are on practical college courses. Trainees are closely supervised and supported by college staff and employers throughout this time.

41. As well as working towards NVQs at level 1, and entry-level wordpower and numberpower qualifications, trainees are also able to gain additional certificates appropriate to the NVQ in food hygiene, health and safety, and first aid to improve their employment prospects. In care, trainees are able to work towards a college-devised accredited qualification, as there is no level 1 NVQ available. Of those trainees currently on the programme, nine trainees have gained or are working towards certificates in food hygiene. Nine are working towards health and safety

certificates. Three have achieved care certificates. Nine have achieved, or are working towards, first aid certificates, and 14 are aiming to achieve wordpower level 1. All certificates are kept in trainees' records of achievement along with a photographic record of their training. Halfway through the training programme, each trainee receives a college certificate, which lists the qualifications achieved and other personal achievements. Retention rates on the programme are high. The majority of trainees go on to obtain jobs. Of those trainees completing their course last summer, nine of the 12 leaving gained sustainable employment. Of the rest, two went on to further study within the college. One was undecided about the future and returned to the careers service for advice.

42. Trainees are clear about the programme they are undertaking and about the different modules they are taking. They understand the various qualifications they undertake as part of the off-the-job training. They also understand how all of the different areas of learning fit together to help them to achieve the main aim of their training programme.

43. Trainees do not know where they are in relation to their overall training plan, how far they have to go before they reach their target or what they have already achieved. Although long-term targets are set, they are not specific to individual trainees.

44. Many of the college staff work with trainees both on and off-the-job because of the structure of the programme and the level of support required by this group of trainees. There is no consistent approach to recording information about trainees. A variety of records are kept in a number of differing formats and by different people. Some are very detailed, while others contain little or no information. The records are not effective in helping trainees to progress. Frequent visits are made to trainees in the workplace to ensure that they are able to settle and resolve any problems at an early stage. However, details of these visits and any discussions held with trainees or employers are rarely recorded. Trainees are continuously supervised during their off-the-job training and frequent informal discussions are held with college staff but these are not recorded.

## **GENERIC AREAS**

### **Equal opportunities**

### **Grade 3**

45. The college has an equal opportunities committee, which is chaired by the principal and meets twice a term. The members review the equal opportunities policy each year. It was last reviewed and amended in November 1999. The policy states how it is to be implemented and details those aspects of equal opportunities needing attention. A sub-committee specifically addresses student admissions to the college which are of an exceptional nature. A student handbook is distributed to all trainees, and includes a statement on equal opportunities and complaints. The self-assessment report identified a number of strengths which are no more than

normal practice and not applicable to work-based training. Further weaknesses were identified and a lower grade was awarded than that given in the self-assessment report.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ wide range of inclusive projects
- ◆ innovative admissions and review panel

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ inappropriate NVQs appeals procedure
- ◆ weak understanding of equal opportunities in the workplace

46. The college has ample facilities for students and trainees with mobility difficulties and there is access to most areas of the college. The new building established in 1998 has specific access for those with disabilities as does a purpose-built nursery. The college has been active in obtaining European funding to provide these facilities. The needs of people in remote rural parts of the area have also been recognised. The college is involved with partners in developing a rural outreach facility which will include information technology access, outreach training and information for people living in the Lowestoft hinterland. In response to a recent national inquiry, the college has developed a code of fairness for staff and students to ensure equal treatment. It has responded to the need for widening participation by collaborating with the district and county councils. This has resulted in the opening of a training centre to help students and clients to develop practical skills in construction, painting and decorating, and electrical engineering. Negotiations are taking place with a local housing association to manage and develop a community resource centre. The college has strong links with all the schools in the area. In order to ensure fair and open access to the college, a special panel was set up in 1996. This panel ensures that applications from people with serious behavioural, social, emotional or physical difficulties are formally reviewed. It also ensures that the appropriate support is available.

47. In the student charter there is a detailed academic appeals procedure. The appeals procedure is also abbreviated in the student handbook. The appeals procedure is based on grades and marks. It is complicated in its wording. There is no clear statement that it applies to the assessment of NVQs. Trainees are not clear about what to do and how to do it if they wish to appeal against an assessment. There is a complaints procedure, which applies to all college activities. However, there are no clear guidelines as to how trainees should make complaints about activities in the workplace. Trainees and employers have a weak understanding of the application of equality of opportunity in the workplace. When reviews take place in the workplace, the business service officers have now started to monitor employers' equal opportunities practices. The college has just established terms of

#### **GOOD PRACTICE**

*This is an example of good practice in developing basic skills. A drop-in basic skills workshop has been developed in a local company. The workshop has a wide range of learning materials as well as up-to-date information technology. One of the New Deal clients working on his literacy needs has also developed expertise in using the digital camera. He is now training the company's staff by giving presentations on its use.*

reference for an employer liaison committee. The terms of reference do not include how equality of opportunity is to be implemented in the workplace for trainees.

### **Trainee support**

### **Grade 3**

48. Lowestoft College's trainees are mainly recruited by referral from the careers service, the Employment Service or from local schools. Some trainees are familiar with the college and the opportunities available to them through school and college links. Some trainees have been assessed by the careers service as needing additional support. With the exception of foundation trainees, members of the college's TEC/New Deal team interview all other applicants. They give information about training choices and assess their literacy and numeracy skills. In addition, an initial assessment of key skills in communication, application of number and information technology is carried out for national trainees and modern apprentices. Once completed, a training plan is agreed and drawn up. The strengths identified in the self-assessment report were based around staff being helpful, and pastoral care. Further strengths were identified by inspectors and the same grade was awarded.

#### **STRENGTHS**

- ◆ good response to individual trainees' needs
- ◆ good integration of trainees from another provider
- ◆ effective jobsearch for New Deal clients in construction

#### **WEAKNESSES**

- ◆ weak recording of additional learning support
- ◆ lack of structure for providing learning support
- ◆ poor involvement by employers in reviews

#### **GOOD PRACTICE**

*One trainee working towards an NVQ at level 2 in merchant vessel operations is dyslexic. In order for him to be able to write up his portfolio statements during his 28-day periods at sea, the college negotiated funding with the TEC to obtain a lap-top computer and printer. The trainee has recently completed his NVQ and is now aiming to progress to the level 3 deck officer award.*

49. Staff are highly aware of and responsive to the training and potential needs of individual trainees within their programme area. Through their knowledge of the facilities within the college, they can refer trainees to additional assessment with the learner support team. This may be when dyslexia is suspected or if a trainee would benefit from specific help with particular aspects of training such as additional numeracy or literacy training. Trainees feel able to raise issues and concerns with their college tutor or workplace trainer. The college offers a range of support opportunities for clients and trainees across all training programmes. As registered students of the college, all trainees have full access to all its support services, including initial assessment, additional learning support, careers guidance and counselling. The student charter sets out the level of service that trainees and clients can expect, including induction, training, health and safety and equality of

opportunity.

50. Because of the problems of assessing key skills, the college has purchased a specific diagnostic assessment package. This is now being used with all trainees enrolled on programmes since September 1999. It is proving to be effective in identifying trainees' levels of attainment in key skills. Trainees' individual training plans clearly identify their specific training and development needs in key skills.

51. The majority of staff are sensitive to individuals who may need to approach their training at a slower pace, for whatever reason. Frequent visits are made to trainees in the workplace by a variety of college staff including a member of the TEC/New Deal team. The frequency of these visits varies depending on the vocational programme being followed.

52. In October 1999, 13 trainees in the occupational areas of construction and engineering were transferred from another training provider to Lowestoft College. Each trainee was re-assessed both for vocational skills and for suitability of the NVQ. Individual training plans were found to be inappropriate and in many cases trainees were working towards expired NVQs. The college has successfully re-assessed all trainees. Trainees are now working towards the correct qualification. Two trainees who previously had no work experience or employment have been successfully placed with a local holiday camp. They are making excellent progress and are now fully employed.

53. There is a wide variance in the jobsearch programme for New Deal clients. In construction, jobsearch is well integrated into the learning programme. It takes place progressively to build up clients' skills. The programme is well structured and clients make good progress. Ninety per cent of New Deal clients in construction have obtained employment. Of the 139 New Deal clients who have been on the programme, 34 have gained employment. Seventy-nine left without employment or a completed individual training plan. In other occupational areas, jobsearch is haphazard. One client who had an unsuccessful interview for a position at the college was given no interview guidance or counselling.

54. Most new trainees are assessed at their initial interview using nationally standardised tests to establish their learning support needs. Once in an occupational area, additional occupationally related assessment for literacy and numeracy may take place and different needs identified. Trainees and clients may also have additional needs which are identified during their training. There is no systematic recording of these identified learning needs on individual training plan. Many staff in occupational areas refer trainees directly to the college department responsible for learning support where a specific and detailed learning plan is drawn up related to their individual needs. A few trainees refer themselves. There is no mechanism to ensure that staff in the TEC/New Deal team have this information at the time of review. Regular meetings are held between the TEC/New Deal team and vocational staff and individual trainees are discussed. Information gathered is not recorded on training plans or included in individual



trainees' files. General occupational competence and the appropriateness of the training programme are identified at the initial interview but are investigated further once trainees have joined their occupational area. In some programmes, induction is thorough and trainees have an awareness of most college support systems. This is not the case in all occupational areas. Although there are checklists identifying information which needs to be included as part of the induction process, there are no detailed procedures for this.

55. Most reviews take place every 13 weeks. Some records are kept on what takes place at the reviews. Usually this is pastoral information, rather than the progress and action-planning required to complete programmes. The information in individual training plans is not sufficiently detailed. No targets are set. Additional support needs, if they are known, are not always indicated and therefore are not taken into account when reviews take place. Staff are unable to identify their specific needs and how these might affect their training, or whether the trainee is progressing at an appropriate pace. Current systems are not sufficiently comprehensive or rigorous to ensure that individual trainees' needs are met. There is no systematic mechanism to identify whether a trainee has taken up the opportunity of receiving additional support when it has been identified and recommended. Where trainees do not take up additional support or are unable to access it, there are neither systems to investigate alternatives, nor clear lines of responsibility to find out why it is not being taken up.

56. The level of involvement by employers in trainees and clients' reviews varies. Although there is frequent contact with employers in some areas such as foundation, this is often informal and remains unrecorded. Many employers have little understanding of what the trainee is doing at college. The off-the-job training is not co-ordinated with tasks performed at work. In some areas, such as engineering, employers have expressed particular concerns about their own ability to help trainees learn key skills. They are unclear as to what constitutes key skills and do not know how trainees can complete them.

### **Management of training**

### **Grade 3**

57. The contract for all training programmes at Lowestoft College is managed by the TEC/ New Deal team which provides the point of contact for communication with the TEC. The team consists of a contract manager, two full-time and one part-time business service officers, a part-time New Deal support officer, one part-time finance officer and an administration trainee. The contract manager reports to a business manager located within the customer and commercial services unit of the college. The business manager reports to the head of the customer and commercial services unit who in turn reports to the vice principal of curriculum and student services. Performance targets are set with heads of the various schools in the college. A system of internal review of performance is in operation involving the relevant occupational programme teams. Meetings are held and are minuted. Agendas are published in advance. These meetings and communications form part

of the college-wide management system. Marketing plans are based on labour market surveys, customer surveys and day-to-day contact with employers. Business service officers take part in regular meetings with the TEC and the careers service as well as other relevant internal and external partners. The business service officers are also involved in recruitment, placing and inducting trainees, liaising with employers and liaising internally with college tutors. A number of strengths and weaknesses were identified in the self-assessment report and inspectors awarded the same grade as that given by the college.

#### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ effective community networks and links
- ◆ strong recognition of and response to local training needs
- ◆ good management of new programme development

#### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ poor use of data in making decisions
- ◆ some poor involvement by employers in NVQ training and assessment
- ◆ unclear responsibility among curriculum teams for planning training in the workplace

58. The college has developed strong relationships, partnerships and networks with other local agencies on a regular basis. College staff involved with training programmes meet with schools, the careers service and the Employment Service, employers and other relevant organisations. Its work with one local high school has helped to improve access to vocational training by giving school children tasters in vocational training then transferring them to work-based schemes when they are old enough. Its work with the Prince's Trust volunteers offers opportunities for progression into training programmes by giving training to develop communication skills and team working. One community project provides opportunities for training and work experience for New Deal clients in building trades through the renovation of derelict housing in an area of deprivation in Lowestoft.

59. There is good awareness in the college of local, regional, national and international training needs. Analysis of labour market information forms an important part of the college's approach to managing training programmes. The customer services and support director and the TEC/New Deal team manager are both actively involved in market research and new programme development. An initiative by the TEC team manager with the food industry has led to the new training programme in meat processing and others are under discussion. Close contact with the maritime industry has enabled the college to respond effectively to local needs by providing a drilling operations programme as part of the New Deal. The college has effectively managed the introduction of new training

programmes. The New Deal programme has enabled the college to address the needs of unemployed people in the area. A new marine transport training programme has been effectively introduced and managed.

60. The TEC/New Deal team is responsible for the training contract and programme monitoring. This unit has developed satisfactory local operational management procedures and practices. Data are collected and analysed to monitor programme performance regarding the meeting of contractual requirements. Information from quarterly reviews of trainees' progress is reviewed by the manager. Service team meetings are held which involve all the TEC /New Deal team staff. Minutes are taken and trainees' progress and performance are regularly reviewed. The business service officers regularly liaise with college tutors through team meetings and informal contact.

61. The college does not analyse its performance on a programme-by-programme basis or across all programmes as a regular part of its management of training. Although effective for full-time students, the current management information systems do not always provide an adequate analysis of its performance in the work-based training programmes, and aggregated management information is not produced. Targets are not set for programmes owing to the lack of analysis and accurate data.

62. In a number of occupational areas, there is no planning with employers of programmes in the workplace. Employers are often unaware of the occupational standards and levels. They are not generally informed about their role in workplace training and assessment. In a few areas, nearly all assessment is carried out off-the-job. There are only a few work-based assessors, mainly in one area. Employers with modern apprentices have not been involved in planning or providing extended induction training, organisation and industry awareness or key skills. Few employers are aware of the opportunities for them to contribute through planning customised programmes.

63. The current arrangements for managing training make it difficult to clearly identify who is responsible for implementing and developing work-based training programmes. The off-the-job programmes provided by the college's schools involve various specialist occupational tutors and college-based resources. However, in the workplace, the responsibilities are less clear. The TEC/New Deal team initiates the programmes, and manages and monitors them to comply with the contract. It is not clear who is responsible for planning the programmes in detail with the employer in the workplace or for carrying out assessments.

64. The issue of key skills has been identified as a weakness. Work-based assessment has also been recognised as a weakness and the action plan in the self-assessment report states that unspecified strategies are required to address this issue. However, it is not clear from the current action plan where the management responsibility lies for this across all programmes, what specifically is to be done, how it is to be taken forward and over what period of time.

## Quality assurance

## Grade 3

65. The quality assurance arrangements meet the requirements of the LLSC. The college has a director of quality and planning who is responsible for the development and implementation of the college's quality assurance systems. This director reports to the acting principal and works closely with the contracts manager for work-based learning to develop the quality assurance of work-based programmes. There is an operational manual for quality assurance and the procedures can also be viewed on the college's intranet. The quality assurance framework has not been amended since the original inspection but the standards are to be reviewed by an external consultant in June 2001. There is an established programme of internal audits and in the past six months this has included an extensive programme of observation of teaching and learning. A new internal verification group has representatives from the three curriculum schools in the college. Quality assurance is a permanent agenda item at the weekly meetings of the college's operations group, which are chaired by the director of quality and planning. The outcomes from these meetings are reported directly to the senior management team. The college was re-accredited as an Investor in People in June 2000.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ ineffective monitoring of quality of training
- ◆ poor co-ordination of internal verification
- ◆ weak monitoring of achievement and retention data
- ◆ lack of useful detail in contracts

66. The college has made good progress in improving the monitoring of the quality of its training. Most targets identified in the action plan prepared after the original inspection have been met. The weaknesses in internal verification which were identified at the original inspection have been remedied. The college's use of data is still poor. The college has made good progress in drawing up and implementing new service level agreements and contracts with employers. A special report was produced for the reinspection. It did not identify the strengths and weaknesses identified by inspectors, but they agreed with the grade given in the report.

### *STRENGTHS*

- ◆ good framework for quality assurance procedures and standards
- ◆ effective development of internal verification procedures and arrangements
- ◆ comprehensive programme of observation of on- and off-the-job training

### *WEAKNESSES*

- ◆ ineffective use of feedback from learners and employers
- ◆ poor use of retention and achievement data

67. The college has a good quality assurance framework and effective procedures to support the framework. A comprehensive quality assurance handbook covers all aspects of the college's operations, including work-based learning. The handbook clearly identifies the standards and targets which are to be met and is a useful document for staff. There is a comprehensive programme of internal checks on quality. All aspects of work-based learning have been checked since the original inspection, to ensure that the relevant quality assurance procedures are being followed. Some of the college's working groups, such as the operational group and the curriculum team, are contributing effectively to the quality assurance process for work-based learning by incorporating issues relating to the quality of work-based learning into their regular agendas. The college is making good efforts to raise awareness among employers of the part they should play in ensuring that learners receive good-quality training. It has recently sent employers a guide to good practice, which clearly identifies their role and responsibilities.

68. Since the original inspection, the college has made considerable improvements to its internal verification system. The director of quality and planning now chairs regular meetings of internal verifiers, where good practice is shared. A comprehensive and detailed handbook on internal verification was produced in October 2000. Staff were given appropriate training in implementing the new procedures. The new procedures have helped to ensure consistency across all the occupational areas. This is particularly noticeable in hairdressing and hospitality, where assessment practices are now effective. More assessments now take place in the workplace and there are well-designed sampling plans and schemes of work which clearly identify when internal verification will take place.

69. There is now a comprehensive programme of observation of teaching and learning. All areas of training are covered and both on- and off-the-job sessions have been observed. The programme of observations is well linked to the staff appraisal process. It is too early to evaluate the full impact of this and the other improvements, as many of them have only been brought in over the past six months.

70. The college has no mechanism for gathering the opinions of learners and employers about the quality of training in the workplace. It uses questionnaires to collect feedback from full-time and part-time students. These questionnaires contain some questions on resources and off-the-job training in the college, but do not give the college enough useful information on its work-based learning programmes.

71. The college gathers data on learners' retention and achievement rates in accordance with the requirements of its contracts. It does not use these data to improve and monitor the quality of training. There is no analysis or evaluation of

possible problems which the data identifies. Just before the reinspection, the college examined retention data and found that there was an overall improvement across the training programmes in the past 12 months. This process is not carried out routinely and there is no system to analyse how improvement has come about or why learners leave their programmes early.